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# FROM COMPETITION TO CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

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**Abstract.** *The research goal is to present the importance of cross-border cooperation in 21st century Europe. Highlighting the fact that cross-border cooperation has become one of the objectives of EU cohesion policy in the periode between 2007-2013. To see the benefits of cross border cooperation we introduced in this paper a case study. I present Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme: purpose, objectives and expected results and I trie to emphasize that the cooperation cross border objectiv has a very important role in administrative convergence and legislation approximation in EU.*

*Research methods used were comparative analysis, historical and analytical method for collecting data needed for research from documents prepared by the European Commission (reports, guides, reviews).*

**Keywords:** *cohesion policy, cross border territory, territorial cooperation objective, administrative convergence*

## 1. Introduction

The political map of Europe comprises at the dawn of 21st century many more independent states and thousands more kilometres of frontiers than 60 years ago. The increase in the number of the Community's land and sea borders and the extension of its territory mean that the value added of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in the Community should be increased.

In the 21 st century Europe, the borders are seen too often as walls at which unwelcome events (disease, economic crisis) or persons (illegal immigrants, organised crime) can and should be stopped. They are not yet perceived as lines along which different worlds of ideas and opportunities can

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meet, fertilize each other and give rise to new forms of governance, development and society.

A cross-border territory is definite as an inhabited space, which has cross-border functions, crossed by flows and relations, many driven by economic and social factors (e.g. home-work commuting; purchasing, education and leisure behaviour; cultural practices which may or may not be the result of cultural or linguistic proximity preceding the existence of the border; business; cooperation between public-sector actors). However, although the existence of at least a few of these practices is a necessary condition for the existence of a cross-border territory (no territory without inhabitants), they often vary greatly, and the presence of the border and its effects may be “suffered” or even repressed.

Disparities between legal and administrative systems, different languages, cultures and traditions may be a source of enrichment and opportunities for citizens to seize but may also constitute insurmountable barriers to contacts, dialogue and co-operation if action is not taken at all appropriate levels of political decision. Dialogue and good administrative co-operation at and between all institutional levels (local, regional and national), between the States involved and their appropriate institutional and legislative frameworks are therefore a key means of ensuring peace, democratic stability and sustainable development in border regions<sup>1</sup>.

Reflecting the debate on the future of the Union, the challenge today is to know what cross-border territories we want to build for tomorrow. Are we moving towards simple free trade areas (free movement of persons, goods, services and capital) or towards genuine territories formed within defined perimeters, backed politically and managed technically by cross-border governance? There is an urgent need to know what position co operation territorial objetctiv occupy in the construction of Europe<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Conference on *Practical Approaches Towards Effective European Transfrontier Co-operation*, 6-7 July 2009, Maastricht, The Netherlands, <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/>, accessed in Nov., 12, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Conference on *Practical Approaches Towards Effective European Transfrontier Co-operation*, 6-7 July 2009, Maastricht, The Netherlands, <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/>, accessed in Nov., 12, 2011

## 2. Territorial cooperation objective of European Union Cohesion Policy

Territorial cooperation is now one of the objectives of the cohesion policy and “an efficient means for the balanced integration of the EU territories aiming to modernize the regions that lack economic and social development” (Ioan Horga, Iordan Gh. Bărbulescu, Adrian Ivan, Mykolia Palinchak, Istvan Suli –Zakar, 2011).

European (2007-2013 cohesion policy) and national public policies on territorial development place emphasis on the necessary territorialisation of the Lisbon objectives. This requires strengthening of cooperation between territorial, business, training and research actors. As the Lisbon strategy aims to match the other major world markets, such as that of the United States, a large market without borders, cross-border territories naturally occupy a key place in the Lisbon issues. It is clear that for reach an economical welfare in Europe it is necessary to pass from competition to cooperation between cross border territories. The principal issue is the need to “move from a logic of pure competition between territories to a logic of cooperation. A transition based on the act of coming closer to a neighbour because it can provide what is lacking for development. This is true both for public-sector actors and for the economic actors themselves”<sup>3</sup>.

Competition between territories is still the rule in many cross-border regions. There is a lack of awareness of the fact that cross-border economic development can generate added value for the whole territory. By participating in the European Union, the States have chosen to cooperate. In the specific context of cross-border economic development, two arguments may lead to cooperation, the argument of complementarity and the argument of economy of scale. It is necessary to make optimum use of the common territorial capital of the cross-border territories. For example, mastery by the labour force and businesses of two languages, cultures, administrative etc . Also, it is necessary to demonstrate the added value of cooperation across borders in order to increase the potential of cross-border territories. The border can be used in a way that optimises collective advantages. Cross-border regional cooperation can create dynamic labour markets, and mobility is one of the keys.

An important role in increasing economic welfare at European Union level plays Cohesion policy which contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies for jobs, growth and sustainable development in the EU, and which make clear that programmes and projects

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<sup>3</sup> Conference on *Practical Approaches Towards Effective European Transfrontier Co-operation*, 6-7 July 2009, Maastricht, The Netherlands, <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/>, accessed in Nov., 12, 2011

cofinanced with the support of cohesion policy and Structural/Cohesion Funds should target resources on the following priorities: improving the attractiveness of member states, regions and cities by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving their environmental potential; encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy by research and innovation capacities, including new information and communication technologies; and creating more and better jobs by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises and increasing investment in human capital

The new Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 recognizes the importance of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation, which is a key objective in an enlarged Europe. The Funds providing assistance under the cohesion policy are therefore limited to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund<sup>4</sup>.

In the Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 the status of territorial cooperation has changed and it is now raised to the level of an entirely separate objective, which gives it greater visibility and greater legal basis (Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 Guide, 2007: 22). Territorial cooperation objective financed by ERDF aims to strengthen the cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives, as well as transnational and interregional. It supports the actions favorable to integrated territorial development, aligned with community priorities, strengthening interregional cooperation and exchange of experience between appropriate territorial levels. The essential aim of cross-border cooperation in Europe is to integrate areas divided by national borders that face common problems requiring common solutions.. It aims to promote common solutions for the authorities of different countries in the domain of urban, rural and coastal development, the development of economic relations and the setting up of small and medium-sized enterprises. The cooperation is centred on research, development, the knowledge-based society, risk prevention and integrated water management. Territorial cooperation objective provides support particularly for border regions development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint sustainable territorial development. European Territorial Cooperation is intended to provide a significant contribution to the renewed Lisbon strategy. Assistance will be concentrated on the main priorities in support of sustainable development and job creation (Operational Programme 2007-2013: 1).

The three objectives for cohesion policy – “convergence”, “competitiveness and employment” and “European territorial co-operation” – which guide Cohesion Funding (2007 - 2013) reflect this renewed emphasis on

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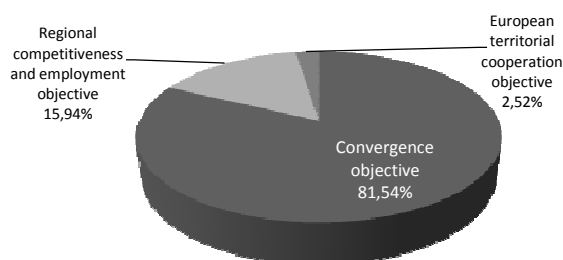
<sup>4</sup> Art. 1, EU Regulation no. 1083/2006

territorial co-operation, which is now a mainstream objective of cohesion policy.

The “Objective 3” on co-operation replaced the INTERREG Community initiative and will attract funding of €7.75 billion in the programming period – approximately 74 per cent of which will be dedicated to crossborder co-operation; 21 per cent to transnational co-operation; and 5 per cent to inter-regional co-operation and networking (particularly, it seems, around the themes of the Lisbon Strategy). The co-operation objective is seen as having an important role to play in ensuring the balanced and sustainable development of the Community, reducing so-called ‘barrier effects’ through cross-border, transnational and inter-regional co-operation.

The objective of European Territorial Cooperation consist in encouraging regions and cities across the EU to work and learn together. To facilitate the implementation of territorial co-operation, in July 2006 a new Regulation on the establishment of a ‘European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation’ (EGTC) was passed by the European Parliament and the European Council. This is intended to *‘overcome the obstacles hindering territorial cooperation’* by instituting a *‘cooperation instrument at the Community level for the creation of cooperative groupings in Community territory, invested with legal personality, called ‘European groupings of territorial cooperation’*” (Olivier Sykes, 2011).

In order to underline the importance of European territorial cooperation objective we present the financial allocation. For the programming period 2007 - 2013 the available resources amount is EUR 308.041 billion:



The territorial cooperation objective is funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), who has the role to promote investment and correct the main regional imbalances of the European Union. Priority financing is aimed at research, innovation and environmental risk prevention.

Regarding territorial cooperation objective, the ERDF focus its assistance on the following priorities:

1. Development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities, through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development, and primarily<sup>5</sup>:

- (a) By encouraging entrepreneurship, in particular the development of SMEs, tourism, culture, and cross-border trade;
- (b) By encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources, as well as the prevention of natural and technological risks;
- (c) By supporting links between urban and rural areas;
- (d) By reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information, communication networks;
- (e) By developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures, in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education. In addition, the ERDF may contribute to promoting legal and administrative cooperation, the integration of cross-border labour markets, local employment initiatives, gender equality and equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources.

ERDF is the most important structural substance in terms of resources, substantial financial aid granted for disfavor areas.

ERDF and European Social Fund (ESF) finances projects after each Member State agrees with the European Commission, on one or more operational programs.

Operational Programmes set priorities for ESF or ERDF intervention. Projects beneficiaries can be public administrations, NGOs and private agents. Potential beneficiaries of ESF and ERDF actions should contact the management of these funds in their own Member State.

ESF and ERDF is founded on the principle of co-financing and shared management. EU financial support always goes together with public or private financing. Depending on a number of socio-economic factors, financing may vary between 50 and 85% of the total cost of the interventions.

Assumed shared management guidelines for ESF and ERDF actions are developed at European level and application-site is managed by the relevant authorities, national or regional authorities in each member state. These entities preparing operational programs select and monitor projects (European Commission, *Investing in Europe's future*, Fifth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: 24).

The principles of implementation of programs financed by ERDF under cross-border cooperation are:

- All projects must be developed and implemented jointly;

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<sup>5</sup> Article 6 , UE Regulation no 1080/2006

- Open competitive (in the context of calls for joint proposals) and selection of projects within Monitoring Committees / Selection, which includes representatives from all states participating in the program.

For each project, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves. The lead beneficiary shall assume the following responsibilities<sup>6</sup>:

- (a) It shall lay down the arrangements for its relations with the beneficiaries participating in the operation in an agreement comprising, *inter alia*, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- (b) It shall be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation;
- (c) It shall ensure that the expenditure presented by the beneficiaries participating in the operation has been incurred for the purpose of implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between those beneficiaries;
- (d) It shall verify that the expenditure presented by the beneficiaries participating in the operation has been validated by the controllers;
- (e) It shall be responsible for transferring the ERDF contribution to the beneficiaries participating in the operation.

Member States participating in an operational programme shall appoint a single managing authority, a single certifying authority and a single audit authority, the latter being situated in the Member State of the managing authority. The certifying authority shall receive the payments made by the Commission.

The evaluation of cross- border cooperation programmes have shown that over 18 000 km of roads, railways or pathways were built or upgraded in border areas, along with investment in telecommunications and environmental improvement, and over 25 000 local and regional initiatives supported (European Commission, *Investing in Europe's future*, Fifth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: 221).

In Europe today, economic success is often dependent on a region's capacity to develop networks with other regions. Cooperation and sharing experience between regions can be a key trigger in stimulating a dynamic, forward-looking regional development process. The EU has an important role to play in brokering and supporting such partnerships, both between regions within the Union, and with neighbouring regions outside. Thousands of projects developed over many years have demonstrated the benefits for regions

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<sup>6</sup> Articolo 20, UE Regulatione no. 1080/2006



of working in partnership, sharing ideas and charting new and innovative ways of harnessing European investment.

### **3. Case study: Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme**

Romania is eligible under two objectives of Cohesion Policy: Convergence and European Territorial Cooperation.

In 2007-2013, Romania participates in the development of 11 programs under European Territorial Cooperation objective.

The Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme is one of them. The programme was approved by the European Commission on December 18, 2007 under the Commission Decision no. 6331 and the first contract was signed on 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2009. During 2009 five intermediary deadlines in the context of the second call were available in the framework of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, as follows: 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2009, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009, 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2009, 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009 and 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2009. The key objectives of the Programme are closely focused on delivering results and favorable outcomes that address the specific needs of the border region and are in line with the Lisbon strategy. The proposed partnerships through the selected projects aim for growth and jobs, which are in line with the Lisbon strategy and sets out priorities that will help the Union and its Member States drive up productivity and create more and better jobs. Therefore through the implementation of its priority axis, Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme will contribute to the accomplishment of Lisbon strategy objectives, by:

- Making Romania – Bulgaria cross-border area a more attractive place to invest and work;
- Through implementing the selected projects;
- The selected projects will have impact on the development of knowledge and innovation for growth in the eligible areas;
- Creating more and better jobs at European levels attracting more people into employment and investing more in human capital through better education and skills.

This program involves Community support for 15 NUTS 3 regions, seven regions of Romania (the counties of Mehedinti, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Calarasi, Constanta) and seven regions of Bulgaria (districts of Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo , Ruse Silistra and Dobrich). In addition, Bulgaria Razgrad district was included in the eligible program as flexibility rule contained in Article 21 (1) of the Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The eligible area is characterized by

specific problems of border areas, where marginality and isolation from economic and decision-making centers are increased by the presence of borders which limit economic, social and cultural and affects joint management and effective planning. Border area is not homogenous and lacks an identity as a region. Current socio-economic analysis shows that economic development, growth and job creation is slow, however, there are potential beneficial cross-border cooperation.

Regarding the environment, the area is also characterized by landscapes, ecosystems and a rich and varied morphology but also very vulnerable.

Therefore, the overall strategic objective of the program is to bring together individuals, communities and economies of the Romania-Bulgaria border area and to support the creation by them of an area of cooperation, resources and advantages to its human, natural and ecological based on a sustainable approach. The priorities of the programme are:

**Priority 1: Accessibility** - Improved mobility and access to transport, information and communication infrastructure in the cross-border area.

The focus of the priority axis will lie on promoting and implementing of joint cross-border solutions in the field of road and river transport and ICT, which will lead to overcome the impact of geographical and functional barriers both to traffic flows and communication in the Programme area. These are pre-conditions to the mobility of goods and people and to the economic and social common undertakings within the Programme area and thereby this priority axis will contribute to improving the attractiveness of the cross-border area and strengthening the area sustainable economic growth and territorial cohesion.

Around 80.59 million Euro ERDF grant is available for this priority axis, matched by 13.79 million Euro national contributions.

**Priority 2: Environment** - Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross-border area.

The focus of this priority axis will be on the prudent exploitation and protection of the intrinsic quality and value of the area's outstanding natural resources by joint initiatives, including prevention from natural and technological risks and the fast reaction to emergency situations, as the elemental conditions to increase the quality of life and attractiveness of the Programme area and to achieve a sustainable socio-economic development.

Around 76.2 million Euro ERDF grant is available for this priority axis, matched by 13.7 million Euro national contributions.

**Priority 3: Economic and Social Development** - Economic development and social cohesion by joint identification and enhancement of the area's comparative advantages.

The focus of this priority axis is on reinforcing the economic and social connections in the border area in order to take advantage of its opportunities and strengths and to boost an economically competitive cross-border area, as a whole. It will encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and the growth of the knowledge economy in the Programme area, contribute to increasing the quality and level of services and attracting more people into employment. Also, by strengthening the social and cultural coherence among people and communities this priority axis will contribute to the development of the cooperative area and to the creation of a favourable image and regional identity, able to enhance the sustainable economic growth of the cross-border area.

Around 47.9 million Euro ERDF grant is available for this priority axis, matched by 8.6 million Euro national contributions.

**Priority 4:** The Technical Assistance under this programme will only finance activities directly related to the Programme management. Technical assistance will be invested in the overall management and promotion of the programme, rising awareness, pro-active project generation and interactive development.

The Technical Assistance Priority Axis of the Programme is split into two Key Areas of Interventions:

KAI 4.1 - Support for the implementation and overall management of the Programme;

KAI 4.2 - Support for the communication and information of the Programme.

Beneficiaries of the Technical Assistance priority axis are: Joint Technical Secretariat, Audit Authority, National Authority, Managing Authority.

Expected results of Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme are:

- Access to ITC facilities for 3,2 milion people;
- 30 projects developing joint management systems for environmental protection;
- 100 projects on raising awareness about environmental protection and management;
- Creating joint flood prevention systems for 70% of the Danube in the border area;
- Business infrastructure for SMEs 500;
- 360 000 people on employment opportunities for employment;
- Completion of training border by 3500 people.

In order to reach the expected results and in accordance with EU regulations in romanian administrative system were made some structural adjustments through Government Decision no. 46/2007. Through the

administrative act mentioned above, were designated the public institutions responsible for coordination and management of structural instruments in our country for Teritorial cooperation objective<sup>7</sup>.

The two states in the program (Romania and Bulgaria) have designated a number of entities that form the mechanism for implementation and monitoring of this program. These entities can be divided into national bodies and joint bodies, as presented below:

- Managing Authority was designate Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing, Bucharest, Romania. Management Authority is responsible for managing and implementing the operational program in accordance with Commission regulations and principles of sound financial management<sup>8</sup>;
- National Authority was designate Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Sofia, Bulgaria. National Authority is the institution Bulgarian counterpart Management Authority;
- Certifying Authority was designate Ministry of Public Finance, Bucharest, Romania. Certifying Authority is responsible for certifying statements of expenditure and payment requests, before being sent to the Commission. Certifying Authority is responsible for: preparation and submission by the Commission of expenditure and payment applications certificates;
- Payment Unit was designate Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing, Bucharest, Romania. The main role of Paying Authority is making payments to beneficiaries;
- Audit Authority is an independent body associated with the Court of Accounts, Bucharest Romania;
- Group Joint Monitoring Committee consist of representatives of both partner countries.

The two Member States establish a Joint Monitoring Committee and a Joint Committee Selection of project. The main responsibility of the Joint Monitoring Committee is to ensure the effectiveness of implementation of projects under the program.

Managing Authority may delegate some tasks JTS through a written and signed paper. In this case, the Authority will carry out monitoring to ensure that JTS tasks in a manner satisfactory to the Managing Authority. This reflects the fact that the MA remains solely responsible for ensuring implementation of the program in accordance with relevant regulations.

Joint cross-border projects must meet at least two of these criteria: joint development, implementation, joint staffing and joint financing.

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<sup>7</sup> It has been used the updated name of the authorities

<sup>8</sup> Art. 1, Government Decision no. 46/2007

In general, the public authorities on either side of the border have joint responsibility for providing the right framework and the right instruments for cooperation and for minimising the obstacles hampering cross-border economic development. At present businesses encounter a number of difficulties when they want to undertake cross-border cooperation or when they look beyond their “natural” territory, bounded by the national border. This makes it difficult to mobilise businesses for cross-border projects. A whole series of difficulties arises: funding; distortions of competition (public-sector contracts closed to businesses from the other side of the border); lack of interoperability in terms of standards, insurance, certifications, labour market, etc.

For joint projects can be implemented changes were needed in the national legislation of both countries. During 2009 a series of amendments of the relevant legislation in Bulgaria were made concerning the implementation of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, as follows:

a) The **Public Procurement Law** was amended twice within 2009. The first amendment entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009 and the second on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009. The law sets the principles, conditions and rules of the public procurement assigned by public institutions. The main amendments referred to:

- The thresholds applied for different type of procedures;
- The calculation of the value of the public procurement in order to define the type of procedure to be applied;
- The organization of the Public Procurement Agency and the competences of its Director General;
- The principles and rules of the ex-ante control on public procurement procedures;
- The operational management of the procedures: content of the announcement; the evaluation criteria; conditions for cancelling the procedures; conditions for amendment of signed contracts; conditions for opening of the technical and financial offers;
- The sanctions for failure to observe the Public Procurement Law.

b) The **Ordinance on the Award of Public Procurement** sets the conditions and rules of the small public procurement assigned by public institutions. It was amended once in 2009, the amendment entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009. The main amendments referred to:

- The thresholds applied for different type of procedures;
- The operational management of the procedures: starting the procedures, documents for participation in the tender, content of the offers, requirements for the members of the evaluation committee;

conditions for amendment of signed contracts; conditions for opening of the technical and financial offers.

c) **Decree of the Council of Ministers № 55 of 20 March 2007** regarding the Conditions and contract award procedure conducted by beneficiaries of agreed grant from the Structural Funds of the European Union and from the PHARE Programme of the European Union; amend. SG 109 2008 was amended by Decree of the Council of Ministers № 207 of 19 August 2009. The main amendments referred to: The thresholds applied for different type of procedures and the introduction of the EEA Financial Mechanism.

Concerning the relevant Romanian legislation, during 2009, a series of amendments were made concerning the implementation of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, as follows:

a) **Ordinance No. 46/2009** regarding the modification of fiscal code, fiscal procedure code and the law regarding the fiscal certificate;

b) **Common orders** of the Minister of Regional Development and Housing (no. 6/15.01.2009) and Minister of Public Finance (no. 136/23.01.2009) approving the methodological framework for the implementation of Government Ordinance No. 46/2007 regarding the distribution of external non-refundable funds and of national contribution in the budget of the institutions involved in their management for the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective;

c) **Common orders** of the Minister of Regional Development and Housing (no. 916-922/03.11.2009) and Minister of Public Finance (no. 3362-3368/11.12.2009) approving the categories of eligible expenditure for the second call for proposals in the framework of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013;

d) **Government Emergency Ordinance No. 34 /2006** regarding public procurement was modified on 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2009. The main changes were the modifications of thresholds and deadlines concerning the public procurement which were relevant for the Romanian partners of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme in order to unfold correct procurement procedures,

Eligible beneficiaries for projects finance under teritorial cooperation programme are generally local and regional authorities, NGOs, universities and research institutes in the border area (for cross-border cooperation programs) and wide area (for cooperation programs transnational and interregional).

In 2009, a number of 18 projects were approved for selection. For example, in 2011 the following project "Border cooperation in public administration between communes Kainardja, Bulgaria and Lipnica, Romania " was granted. The main goals of the project are to create cultural relations, to develop cooperation in the sphere of health and social care and organize

regional sporting events. According to the project activities have been organized a campaign ANTI AIDS and competitions involving young people in the two villages. Other project implemented is "Information centers Pleven-Craiova-Slatina, a bridge between the two countries." The two partners in the project are Association "Euroregion Pleven-Olt" and "Romanian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation". The project goal is to create an interactive portal for information exchange between companies, NGOs and local authorities. Will function three information centers which will provide timely information on topics and issues related to opportunities for partnership in all areas of economic development in the border region and will be created an database which will contains useful information for companies on both sides of the river in three languages, Bulgarian, Romanian and English.

#### **4. Conclusion**

If the centuries, between European countries it was a competition in terms of economy and national achievements, in present the cohesion policy aims to achieve a partnership in order to build a competitive Europe in the world. An example of this is cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria to achieve common benefits (for ex. Calafat-Vidin bridge accomplished with European funds, etc.).

European funds primarily aims to reduce the economic development gap between the poorest regions and other regions and between the poorest communities and other communities within the EU, but this process can not be achieved without a legislative harmonization between states and a model of good practices in the management of funds. Since public administration plays an essential role in the efficient management of funds, public institutions structure and administrative culture of each country directly affects the achievement of economical convergence. So, we can said that administrative convergence is a must, in the process of economical convergence and cooperation in the European Union.

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